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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 22, 2006

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PRESS RELEASE

Macedonian internet use reaches 27%

Recent independent survey shows major increase in internet penetration

Nearly one-third of all residents of Macedonia now use the internet on a regular basis, and nearly half of the population uses computers in some way, according to a recent survey conducted by Strategic Marketing and Media, a Skopje-based firm. According to the survey, a significant increase in internet usage appears to have occurred over the last six months, with the largest increase occurring among younger users (aged 4 -19). The survey was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), part of the U.S. Mission to Macedonia.

The result appears to represent a major increase in internet usage. Previous surveys, conducted in 2002-2003, reported household usage of the internet as only between 4 and 7%, using varying methodologies.

"I am pleased to see that internet use has increased in Macedonia, and I hope it continues to grow," said U.S. Ambassador Gillian Milovanovic in a statement prepared for the survey release. "I hope more and more people realize that the internet is and should be a part of their daily academic and professional lives, in addition to being fun."

The *Internet and Computer Usage Survey* conducted from March 28 to April 3, 2006, involved 1017 respondents. The survey was conducted in accordance with European Union standards for such polls. A similar survey is to be conducted next year. The survey is designed to identify areas for growth in the Information Technology (IT) field.

"The world is changing every day, and connectivity to the Internet provides manifold advantages to those who are connected, in comparison with those who are not," said Glenn Strachan, Chief of Party for USAID's Macedonia Connects project.

The top three findings of the survey are:

- Of those surveyed, 43% said they used computers while 27% said they used the internet, indicating that efforts to increase access are working.
- Of those surveyed, 37% said they used computers in their homes while 13% said they used the internet in their homes, indicating the market for IT growth is good. (In Skopje 48% of the city's population have household computers while 21% have home internet access.)
- 8% of all internet users in Macedonia have started using the internet over the last 6 months. The largest number of new users is youth, indicating that the availability of internet in schools is making a difference.

Copies of the survey can be downloaded from <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>

NOTES TO EDITORS: The American people, through USAID, have invested more than \$450 million in Macedonia since 1993. More than 20 projects worth \$30 million a year are currently being implemented. These projects are designed to support Macedonia's transition to a free market-based,

multi-ethnic democracy. They include initiatives to accelerate economic growth, develop democratic institutions, and educate citizens for a modern economy. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>